

## Soldiers' Correspondence.

[FOR THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE.]

## The Battle of Shiloh from My Own Standpoint.

HOW EIGHT HUNDRED MEN HELD THE KEY-POINT TO THE LANDING AGAINST OVER EIGHT THOUSAND FOR FIVE HOURS AND SAVED THE ARMY.

Editor National Tribune:

Sir: Reunions of army organizations call to mind old associations and thrill me often with a recollection of my experiences during the war. I have noticed since its close that the popular impression exists that at the battle of Shiloh, on Sunday, the 6th of April, 1862, the entire army was routed and fell back in the face of the enemy. Now, sir, from my standpoint I saw matters in an entirely different light, and, as an actor in the scene, I desire to correct the impression previously referred to, and to do justice to a glorious body of Union troops. I propose to let the people know about this famous battle, as a looker-on and contestant. It was quite early on that lovely and never to be forgotten morning of April 6th that heavy cannonading was heard far to the right from my corps, and seemed the forest of the weather. My brigade consisted of the 1st Ohio on the right, the 55th Illinois (my own) in the center, and the 54th Ohio Zouaves on the left, and was the first brigade of Sherman's division of the Fifteenth Corps. When we took our places at the front my brigade was isolated from the rest of the division, sent to the extreme left to guard the ford on Lick Creek, the only place an army in column could cross. We had been lying there some three weeks doing fancy band-box duty, and had made no preparation for the reception of the enemy. We supposed the rebel army twenty miles away at Corinth, and had no pickets out. The firing heretofore alluded to seemed to be rapidly nearing us, and we could soon hear the rolling of drums, the long call, and sharp musketry. Soon we were in line, and at nine o'clock we moved to the rear and left, the left resting upon the creek below the ford. The creek ran in a northeasterly direction into the Tennessee. The ford was in front of my regiment. No regiment in the brigade had the balance of the line had both. Our line was on the north side of a ridge. At ten o'clock a. m. the enemy opened on us from twelve batteries. We cared very little for the shot, as they flew as high as the tree tops. We hugged Mother Earth. Soon the enemy's infantry appeared to be moving down the creek past the ford, but it did not try to cross. The enemy saw our position, line. This was a damper, and a military necessity obliged us to change our position. This was soon done. We fell back to the next ridge. The enemy's fire had been very demoralizing. We were then a body of about 800 men, as stated in Brigadier General David Stuart's report—members of the 55th Illinois and 54th Ohio Infantry. All the rest "skedaddled." The 71st Ohio, Colonel R. B. Mason, went streaking through the woods, that officer on his cream-colored horse and all his men following him. This left a gap on our right. We were strung out the length of two regiments—not more than half a line of battle. General Hardee, with eight full regiments, had come for us. We now crossed the ford and moved up on the south side of our ridge. We opened on them at some thirty yards distance. We had orders to save ourselves by getting behind any log, tree, or stump we could find, and were allowed to advance and retreat so to do. I had eighty rounds of cartridges, and I think most of the boys had as much. Very soon we had a volume of smoke rolled up upon both lines. We could not see the enemy, and were ordered to fire low. The musketry soon became a solid roar. It was indeed terrible. Some of my company boys had boasted that if they ever got into action they would not skulk behind a stump or tree, but would stand up in bold relief. I saw one of our sergeants walking down and never rose. Now we were in serious business, and after the expiration of two hours had no prospect of relief. After some two and a half hours a breeze sprang up that blew away the smoke from my front. For the first time I saw a bunch of rebels in a clump of bushes, flaunting their contemptible flag. This made my blood boil. I could not load and fire fast enough. That was a splendid round at that crowd, and several came down. Soon the balance dispersed. Captain Bask of Company K, came up, took refuge behind my tree, and said he would superintend my squad. I now looked to my shoes; they were covered with blood. I faced to the rear, and saw old Mr. Ford down and in a gore of blood. I thought he was dead, but he reported in camp some days after the battle. I forgot to say in its proper place that some half hour after the firing ceased our officers advanced and shouted, "Come on, they are retreating." It was the second relief fell in and sent a shower of bullets that made the rebels hunt their trees. Their reserve was in a thick chapparal on the creek, and we killed more of them than those in line. A company of rebel cavalry was seen flanking us. We paid no attention to them. After some five hours of incessant and terrible firing I noticed it began to lag on the Union line, and observed that the boys must be out of cartridges. I had fired all but one. All was quiet near me—not a man to be seen. I very quietly put down my hard-kat and spread it with the best grass in the world, then leaped to the rear, crossed a deep run, then up a steep hill. As we got in sight of the enemy a shower of bullets came after us in a hollow square, in easy range of the enemy. Many boys thought that he intended to sacrifice us all there, but all "dried up" and noticing that as soon as we were thus formed not a shot was fired by the enemy. After some half an hour the boys noticed that the rebels were ranging a battery to rake us, and called Colonel M's attention to it. He speedily got us out of range. The enemy, up to this time, had not advanced a particle. Colonel M. now rode toward the landing, and we all moved gradually up to support the line of artillery established by General Sherman in the fore part of the day, half a mile from the landing and three miles in length. I will give an idea of this line as well as I can. A mortar points to the front; two or three yards to the right and left is a siege gun; enfilading both ways next to it were Parrott guns and the smallest brass pieces. We took our position on the left and rested on the river. I will now inform you why Colonel M. formed that square. I was one day, after the battle, passing his tent. He had some visitors from Chicago, his native city. I heard him say "hollow square," and I stopped to listen to his conversation. He said he got the idea from General Sherman at the time he ran out of cartridges. "Sherman had said, 'Hold the enemy, if possible, by any strategy you are master of,' was the Colonel's remark, and the hollow square was an idea I thought would puzzle Hardee." We had gotten almost to the artillery line when we met Colonel M. on his way back from the landing with the cheering news that General Buell was crossing the Tennessee with his army of 40,000 men. The word rang with cheers. At five p. m. the line of artillery was well supported all ready for the attack. They soon appeared across the ravine and formed a line. Our folks kept quiet, but they opened on us from batteries two or three rounds, when a volley from our side quickly silenced them. All was quiet at night save when shells from our gunboats went crashing through the tree tops into the rebel quarters. There was no sleep that night, I tell you. General Buell was crossing his army all night—till eight o'clock in the morning. In the morning we received rations; we had eaten nothing since the morning of the 6th. An order for roll-call told a sad tale. My company had fifty-five men in ranks as we left camp on Sunday morning, and at the roll-call nine only answered in their places. The captain of our company made a great ado over me. After the battle was over he marched us nine to Colonel Dave Stuart's headquarters and introduced us, saying, "General Stuart, I present to you my illustrious, my immortal nine." The General responded, "I will ever remember them and do all in my power for them so long as I command, so help me Moses." Our captain also presented us to General Sherman. We ate the best breakfast that morning on record. The battle was opened on Monday morning about nine o'clock, and after some half an hour General Buell started the rebels on their retreat south. We were promised that we would not be called into action that day, but at ten a. m. we took our line of march to the west and south some four miles, and joined Buell's army on the south just as the rebels were getting over a line of log works four feet high. From the south a large body of cavalry was seen forming for a charge, if necessary. Just before we joined Buell's army some batteries from the other side of the field sent grape and canister for us and wounded several of our men, who begged to be taken to the hospital, about half a mile away. I and several more volunteered to carry them on blankets. Now the enemy is totally routed, and we hold the field—that is, all who did not pursue. Some days after the battle my brigade took a reconnaissance in force to the rebel hospital to see some of our wounded boys. We halted not far from the hospital and sent in a flag of truce, which was honored. A dozen or more rebels came up to us after we entered the hospital and began conversing about the battle of Sunday. We were asked what kind of d-d guns we had, how many men were in the woods, if the

line that engaged them was all the men we had in the woods, and said they had urged Hardee to charge and take us. He said, "No; you just keep your shirts on. You don't know these d-d Yankees like I do; it's a d-d Yankee trick to draw us into that deep ravine full of Yankees." They also said that General Beauregard had given orders to Hardee to take his command and go to the left flank of Grant's army and whip out a small brigade that was guarding the ford at Lick Creek, then go to the landing and destroy all the transports, hospitals, and all the tenancies of the d-d Lincoln army. Then you'll be in the rear, while we will be in the front. Such, reader, was the beginning and end of the battle of Shiloh, and I leave you to judge what was accomplished by the first brigade of General Sherman's division. This was my first and Bentonville was my last fight. I can call to mind nearly all that came under my notice for years while in the army under General W. T. Sherman.

REUBEN P. REED,  
Company H, 55th Illinois Infantry,  
First brigade, second division,  
Fifteenth Army Corps of the Tennessee.

## A Voice from Pennsylvania.

From an old veteran soldier of Bradford County, Pennsylvania, a leading man in the Grand Army of the Republic, we have received the following, which, as it expresses the sentiments of hundreds of thousands of soldiers, we publish in full:

CANTON, BRADFORD COUNTY, PA., January 29, 1880.

Editor National Tribune:

Sir: I converse with many old soldiers in the course of a month's time, and receive a large number of letters from others, and there is a universal call from almost every one for the removal of John A. Bentley. They ask and demand this at the hands of the President as an act of justice. How long must we suffer before the country will do us justice and remove Bentley and place an old soldier in his chair; or, if not an old soldier, at least a man who will not find us guilty of high crimes before he proves our evidence as Mr. Bentley does. He does not believe a direct insult to a class of men the meanest of which has done more for his country than Mr. Bentley ever did or ever will, even if he gets a bill passed placing a surgeon's brigade in every village from Maine to Texas. How long, in Heaven's name, must we be compelled to wait for our just dues, while Mr. Bentley button-holes members of Congress and tries to prove to them that he is an angel of mercy in disguise to us old cripples and tens of thousands of us asking him for our just dues, and he promises to do us justice when he gets his doctors to work; but if he can keep so many thousands of us in a starving condition, the Lord deliver us from the rest of that trouble. If he would go to work and execute the laws, instead of breaking them down by his rules, stay in his office, and keep his clerks from spending all their time paring their finger-nails, he will fill many a sore heart with gladness and deserve the praise of the old soldiers that any other man could get at present, and he justly deserves it, for the men who have earned ten thousand times more than he has, and who have risked their lives for the country, and long-continued ill-health and injustice have eaten up all their property, and now they must either call on "Uncle Sam" or beg or steal; or, should they feel ashamed to beg or too proud to steal, or too honest for one of the other—there is very little difference between asking alms from door to door, or trying to get a pension. Why is it that those men who fought the battles must be insulted and starved and swindled because we ask for what we have earned ten thousand times over? Are Justice and Mercy both dead? Is there no one to plead our cause? Must we submit to all these wrongs because we loved our country? Has the President forgotten the veterans who placed him in his present high position? How long will he turn a deaf ear to the feeble cry of the sick and crippled volunteers of 1861-65? History tells us of many deeds of cruelty in old times. Can anything be more cruel than the manner in which the Pension Commissioner treats our appeals for help? He is not willing to have our claims decided by present law, but says: "No! we must have a set of rules which completely kill the law."

NEW PORTLAND, MAINE, February 1, 1880.

Editor National Tribune:

Sir: I take the liberty to write you a few lines hoping you will publish them in your paper. I was a soldier in the late war, and when I enlisted it was published in all the papers that if we would enlist the Government would give us a pension if we were wounded, and if we were killed it would give our widows and orphans a pension. To the man who had the money it was said, if you will let us have your money we will give you a bond payable in the currency of the country. The Government has done better than that by the man of money.

It has made the bond that was to be paid in greenbacks payable in gold, but what does it say to us soldiers if we ask them to fulfill its promise to us? It says that our claims are fraudulent, and we are represented by Mr. Bentley as a set of knaves and robbers, trying to embezzle money from the Government that does not belong to us. Oh, shame! shame! to the man or to the Government that would keep a man as J. A. Bentley in office to keep abuse on the gallant defenders of our country—men who have lost, some a leg, some an arm, some their lives, and others their health on behalf of their country, and have watered the Tree of Life with their life's warm blood; who have fought on many battle-fields to hand down to their children a Government of liberty and equal rights to all men. But when they dare to ask for their own rights, they are insulted by the men who should be the first to give them their rights.

But Mr. Bentley introduces a bill called the Sixty-Surgeon Bill, a bill which the mere shadow of a man can take from every soldier his pension. If we had ever voted ourselves back pay and had stepped out of the service with \$5,000 stolen from the public Treasury, then Mr. Bentley would have been justified in his bill to cut us off from any claim on the Government, and to call us knaves and swindlers; but we have not done any such thing. We came out of the service with scars and wounds and empty sleeves and broken down constitutions, and because we dare to ask the Government to do by us as it has done by the man of money, Mr. Bentley abuses and scandalizes us.

But there is a just God who presides over the destinies of man, and who has raised up a friend to fight the battles for us; and that friend is yourself, Mr. Editor. I would ask if Mr. Bentley is a soldier? No; but a coward, and unworthy the name of a man, for a man of honor and integrity never would stoop to such baseness.

Think of the distress the passage of his bill will cause the poor soldier and the soldiers' widows and orphans. Where is the soldier who has the means to obtain a pension if Mr. Bentley's bill becomes a law? There is no provision in the bill to compel witnesses to attend court, and no provision for their fees. What kind of a court would it be that cannot compel witnesses to serve and provide for their pay?

Then how much of a chance would a soldier have who claims a pension to obtain one, without a dollar in the world, and perhaps a journey of two or three hundred miles to make; and then his board to pay, his witnesses to pay for, say three months; for in this district there would be some five or six thousand claims presented, and each one would have to take its turn. So I say that it is a mere shadow of justice to bind some one or a majority of the members of Congress to vote for it. But the real meaning of it is to take the pensions from the soldiers and to make it so hard for them that have not got pensions that they would never present a claim. But I trust that such a bill will never pass. I believe we have men in Congress who will advocate our cause; men of true principles, who will stand by us soldiers. I as a soldier appeal to them to vote against it, and to sustain the men who have stood by their country in its hour of need. Oh! that I had the power to swell my voice to such a note that it would reach the halls of Congress. I would say to Senators and Representatives, our claims are slighted, our rights are trampled upon, and we are made to suffer by the cruel neglect of Mr. Bentley. As a soldier I demand his removal or an investigation of his doings, and I think that I speak the mind of every soldier.

HENRY W. CARVILL.

McCUTCHENSVILLE, WYANDOTTE CO., O., Feb. 10, 1880.

Editor National Tribune:

Sir: I am a reader of your most noble paper, and am glad to see the human interest you advocate in behalf of the soldiers' rights. I am an ex-soldier. I enlisted August 23, 1861—was wounded at the battle of Stone River, Tenn., and draw a pension. I belonged to the 49th Ohio Regt. I took part in thirty-four engagements. Now, just think of such an infernal scheme as Mr. Bentley's Sixty-Surgeon Bill. That must die. Hoping this may find room in your noble paper I close.

Yours respectfully,

W. A. BUSHONG.

TERRE HAUTE, IND., February 16, 1880.

Editor National Tribune:

Sir: Permit me to ask our law-makers a question through your worthy paper. We all know that in consequence of the late rebellion the Government entered into a contract with its citizen-soldiers individually. It could have demanded the services of all its able-bodied men and subjects without this special contract by relying upon the principle upon which our and in fact all civilized governments are sustained; but it saw fit to offer special inducements to its citizens, and the citizen-soldiers accepted those terms and fully performed their part of the contract. Hence they have a right to demand of the Government a compliance in good faith with all the conditions and stipulations of said contract; and one of these conditions was a promise to pay certain bounties to soldiers, &c. There is one class of soldiers who have never received one nickel of pay in the way of bounty for their services, and there are soldiers who enlisted at the beginning of the war of the rebellion and in good faith, fighting battle after battle for the Government, and in the line of their duty have contracted diseases and injuries of all descriptions, free from any fault of the soldiers. In fact, the soldier has fully complied with his part of the contract, and should the Government not perform its part also?

When our National Government was threatened with dissolution by the seditious and rebellious conduct of the Southern States, the loyal people of the North and West, by prompt response and continuous service, and hardships and privations in the field and on the sea, succeeded in restoring peace and union throughout the Nation. The soldiers and sailors were complimented on their success and bravery, and the universal concession was that they were deserving of and would assuredly receive future considerations for saving the lives and property of those who enjoyed the luxury and comfort of civil life. What is their reward? Yours respectfully,

JOHN E. RICKELL.

LIBERTY HILLS, IND., Feb. 10, 1880.

Editor National Tribune:

Sir: You can scarce imagine the commotion produced here among the poor suffering soldiers, and the widows and parents of dead ones, at the proposed passage of that infamous Sixty-Surgeon bill, of which John A. Bentley is the author. We all with one accord denounce it as a vicious and most inhuman scheme. It would be the means of swindling and robbing thousands of honest pensioners. And again it appears that Bentley has constructed the arrears law in such a ridiculous way as to deprive or swindle the dependent parents out of their rights, which is another great outrage. In my opinion there is a great difference between the general or original pension law and arrears law. We all know that in the general pension law the father's pension is to begin from the termination of the party having a prior title to pension, but the arrears bill reads as follows: "That the Commissioner of Pensions is hereby authorized and directed to adopt such rules and regulations for the payment of the arrears of pensions, hereby granted, as will be necessary to cause to be paid to such pensioners, or, if the pensioner shall have died, to the person or persons, all such arrears of pension as the pensioners may be or would have been entitled to under this act." Now, I don't see how J. A. Bentley, or any other person, can construe this law in such a way as to deprive a dependent father of the arrears. I believe that the framers of this law fully and honestly intended that the fathers of soldiers should be allowed the arrears of pension. Let us suppose: In case the mother should receive the full amount of her arrears one day, and die the next day, what would be done in such a case? And no other survivors left but the father, would the Commissioner of the Government have a right to demand this money to be paid back again? I think the father would be justly entitled to keep it. I am well acquainted with a man here in very distressed circumstances, old, helpless, powerless, who has joined his wife in an original claim for pension, their son having been killed while in the army. Well, the mother was allowed \$8,000, and afterwards the arrears, but died several months before the papers for the arrears were issued. When Bentley was informed of her death, he refused to pay arrears to the father. Now this poor old man has neither house, home, nor money, and is compelled to live upon charity, though he sacrificed his son for his country. I ask our Congressmen if this is justice? Yours truly,

AN INDIANA SOLDIER.

ELLIS, KANSAS, January 22, 1880.

Editor National Tribune:

Sir: I find in your valuable paper a statement that the Commissioner of Pensions is 240,000 cases behind in paying pensions, and I also find that Congress appropriated \$25,000,000 for the purpose of paying pensions. Now, say each of these 240,000 claimants have honestly due them an average of \$50 each, to meet their demands would require an expenditure of \$12,000,000. Well, if Bentley has paid out \$17,000,000 of the \$25,000,000 appropriated, then there remains but \$8,000,000, or a trifle over \$30 each for these 240,000 claimants. Now, sir, if such is the real state of affairs in the Pension Office, what are the poor maimed, diseased, and worn-out soldiers to do? What are they to expect from such a Government? How can they be expected to love, cherish, and protect a Government that will treat them with such supreme contempt after they have freely for the protection of said Government, imperiled their persons, sacrificed their business, impoverished their health, left their homes and families, deprived themselves of all personal comforts, allowed themselves to be disciplined as soldiers, and answered willingly to every call of that Government. I would ask our Congressmen what they think those men are made of. If they think they are dogs, and will not resent such treatment, they are reckoning without their host. Those men were once the flower and pride of the Nation, and although they are scattered far and wide, racked by disease, and pressed by poverty, yet they are not so degenerate as to mildly submit to such treatment. Although they are disabled and weakened now, they were once powerful enough to save the Government. If she will let them die of want and starvation she must expect to find incited in the heart of every soldier's offspring a spirit of disgust and contempt for such a Government. I like many thousands of others, was compelled to leave the Eastern States and come out West for my health or life. Now, in this country it is almost impossible for a man with good health to make a living. Now what are we to do? To go back is to die of disease; to stay is to eke out a miserable existence—to struggle with poverty and face starvation. Yours, &c., C. D.

WARSAW, KOSCIUSKO COUNTY, IND., January 30, 1883.

Editor National Tribune:

Sir: I am indeed horrified at the inhuman and ridiculous scheme that Mr. Bentley is proposing to deprive the soldiers and their poor destitute heirs of their just and lawful dues and rights by urging members of Congress to pass his infamous Sixty-Surgeon Bill, which I hope and pray Honorable Senators and Representatives will throw under the table with scorn and trample under foot. Thousands of poor suffering and destitute soldiers and their legal heirs would be cheated out of their just rights. Well done, Hon. Allen G. Thurman! Stick to your honorable and well-founded and truthful argument. I hope and trust all the members of that honorable body will stick to you and help you to fight the battle through victory in favor of the rights of the soldiers. If that bill should become a law it would be one of the greatest outrages that ever was perpetrated against any class of people so justly deserving of their just dues. Oh, what a terror-stricken law that would be to many thousands of suffering and needy people!

Please give this space in THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE if you think it will have any bearing against the "Sixty-Surgeon Bill." I tender my warmest thanks to Mr. Thurman and Mr. George F. Edmunds for the active part they are taking in opposition to the "Sixty-Surgeon Bill." I also congratulate all the members who are opposed to it.

J. H., an ex-Soldier.

TYRONE, CARROLL CO., MD., Feb. 7, 1887.

Editor National Tribune:

Sir: I received the TRIBUNE and am much pleased with it. I think it a worthy paper, would not be without it for five times its cost. It is worthy to grace the houses of every family in this broad land. I notice a great deal is said about Mr. Bentley's Sixty-Surgeon Bill, by soldiers and their friends condemning it in loud tones. I presume Mr. Bentley never marched twenty or thirty miles, half in double-quick, in so many half hours to save his country and that dear old emblem, the starry banner of liberty from being trampled in the dust by traitors' feet. Did he ever carry a musket and sixty to eighty rounds of cartridges? Did he ever level his musket at the foe of his country? Did he ever lose an arm or leg? Is he carrying two ounces of lead in any part of his person? I don't think he has done or suffered anything of this kind, or he would adjust the pension claims as fast as they are presented. We marched and fought; we guarded the nation at all hours of night and day; we were in the line to do so, at least I am. Now I hope our Government will notice this neglect of duty, that Bentley will be removed, and there will be placed a man at the head of that department who has seen service in defence of his country's flag and her honor, who has felt the piercing bullet or sting of the bayonet point. Those are the kind of men to manage such affairs and to do right.

SERGEANT

Co. D, 4th Regt. Md. Vol. Inf.